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RIVAL SYSTEMS AND THE MALAYAN PEOPLES.

BY HUGH CLIFFORD, C.M.G.

THE peoples of the Malayan stock, which of old was the dominant race in a portion of the mainland of southeastern Asia and in the neighboring archipelagoes, have seemingly been marked out in an especial manner to be the victims of a strange variety of experiments. Collectively, rabbits, it is popularly supposed, fare worse than other members of the brute creation at the hands of vivisectors; and, similarly, the Malaysans, above their fellows, have been selected by the caprice of fate to fill the patient's bench in a vaster laboratory. But here the shining scalpels are religious systems and rival theories of administration, and the blood let flows, not from individual veins, but from the hearts of nations.

Malayans, in different localities and at various times, have been converted to Hinduism, to Mohammedanism, and to Christianity: some have been conquered and ruled by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spaniards, and the British; and now the republicans of the West are trying to induce a section of this Oriental race to accept the citizenship of the United States as their eventual destiny.

The history of Hinduism among the Malayan peoples is obscure; but at one time it was the prevailing cult, and traces of it still linger in the incantations and magic observances of the Malay medicine-men. The ruins of temples in Java bear witness to the firm root which it had once taken in that island, and it survives to this day, albeit in a degenerate form, in Lômbok and Bâli.

During the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries of our era, however, the faith of Mohammed spread gradually, through the agency of Arabian and Persian traders, from Âcheh in Sumatra to the islands of the Celêbes group and to the Sôlu Archipelago—which geographically forms the southern extremity of the Philippines—thus gaining a long start in the race with its

rival, Christianity. The magnificent doctrine which bids men believe in a single Deity is a conception that has always made a strong appeal to the Malayan imagination, wherefore the new creed quickly submerged the rude pantheism of the Malaysans, and as easily routed Hinduism from most of its strongholds.

The Cross was first planted among a Malayan people who had not already accepted Mohammedanism in 1521, when Magellan cast anchor in the harbor of Cebu, and proceeded, as was the fashion of his age, to spread the love of God and of our neighbors by the aid of some of man's least amiable devices, such as thumb-screws and the like. It was not until 1565, however, that Legaspi landed in Luzon, and, with the help of a handful of brave Spaniards and his band of redoubtable friars, set about the conquest of the archipelago in the name of His Most Catholic Majesty. Even the zeal and love of a Xavier had availed nothing in the Malay Peninsula, for the Mohammedan faith, which is propped by pride and hate, holding as its first principle that the professors of other creeds are deserving only of contempt, had already gripped the people in that region, and against its calm, unquestioning self-content Christianity has never yet prevailed. In the Philippines, however, the Spanish friars had a virgin field in which to work, and the conquest of the huge archipelago was accomplished by them, by their fearless devotion, their noble self-sacrifice, and the attraction which the great truths they taught had for the Filipinos, rather than by the swords of Legaspi's knights.

Thus we find to-day the Malayan peoples professing Mohammedanism in the Peninsula and the Archipelago, Christianity in the Philippines, but retaining in each place something of the rude pantheism which was their natural religion. The Mohammedan Malays are probably the laxest of all the Prophet's adherents: the Filipinos are among the most completely *pas pratiquants* of Roman Catholics: and the conclusion which the observer must draw from a study of these people is, that neither Christianity nor Mohammedanism has had any power materially to alter them.

Passing from a consideration of the religions professed by the Malaysans to an examination of the various systems of administration which have been imposed upon them by Europeans, a similar conclusion is forced upon our recognition. Though they have come into contact with races of such different character as the Dutch, the Spaniards, and the British, and have been submitted

by them to treatment dictated by methods and principles which in each case are strongly individual, the Malays continue to be what Nature, not man, has made them. No matter what their circumstances, what the manner in which their fate has been ordered, no matter whose the hands to which the framing of their destiny has been intrusted, through everything there crop up the inextinguishable tendencies of a people wedded to fantastic beliefs, essentially unmoral, cursed by an apathetic indolence and a childish incontinuity of purpose.

Of the Portuguese system little need be said, for the earliest of their European conquerors were driven from the Malayan lands when Malacca fell to the joint-attack of the Dutch and the Achehnese in 1641. Of the methods of administration employed by the Spaniards in the Philippines, too, no detailed examination is necessary. It is enough to say that it continued to the end to be incredibly inefficient, hopelessly corrupt, wholly divorced from any altruistic consideration for the real welfare of the governed, and that it was further marred by injustice, bigotry, greed, cruelty, and stupidity. In so far as contact with their Spanish rulers has had any influence at all upon the Malayan people of the Philippines, it has tended to emphasize, rather than to diminish, their innate faults and weaknesses of character and habit.

The methods employed in the government of Malaysians by the Dutch and British merit careful attention; for both the Dutch and the British have, for longer or shorter periods, been engaged in this particular task; the efforts of both have, to all outward seeming, been attended with a fair measure of success; yet each has been actuated by wholly different principles, has worked on different lines, and has attained to distinct results.

To take the Dutch system first, the ruling theory of Holland has always been what was the principle of all the white nations when in the beginning they sought possessions over sea. That is to say, the *raison d'être* of a colony is supposed to lie in its ability to yield material advantages to the mother-country, and to grant special privileges to those of her offspring who may elect to seek their fortune away from home. The Dutch have worked out their system upon this hypothesis with characteristic thoroughness. Finding their share of the East Indies thickly populated by an indolent, ease-loving brown people, they early perceived that, unless some means could be devised of stimulating these men to

perform a fair share of toil for the benefit of the community at large, the Malayan possessions of Holland would fail to fulfil the requirements demanded of them by the mother-country. Accordingly, they hit upon the plan of so taxing the native population that, unless each individual devoted himself to work, with something as nearly approaching energy as a man of Malayan blood can compass, no margin should be left over for the support of himself and his family, after the demands of the government had been satisfied. In pursuit of this plan a bewildering number of burdens were imposed upon the natives of the Dutch colonies. They were called upon to pay a poll-tax, as soon as each male attained to the age of puberty, as a preliminary justification of their existence; a tax was put upon their land; a tithe was taken of their crops; in many districts agriculturists were required to set aside a portion of their land whereon to grow produce which was a government monopoly, and which, as such, was taken over by the administration at about sixty per cent. of its market value. In addition to this, the Dutch made the natives responsible for the up-keep and maintenance of the roads constructed through or near their villages, and forced them further to devote a certain number of days in each year, free of wage, to work upon the estates of European planters in their vicinity. In this way, the government of Netherlands-India derived a large revenue, and was able to remit satisfactory sums to Holland wherewith to swell the surpluses of the mother-country. Of late years, the capabilities of the colonies in this direction have been greatly restricted, for not only has the revenue itself declined, owing to bad seasons, but the constant drain on the local treasuries caused by the thirty-years' war in *Âcheh* has led to serious financial difficulties. The Dutch system, however, has in other ways continued to produce the results expected of it, for the inhabitants of the colonies have, to some extent, been made diligent by law. That is to say, they have learned to work as hard as they know how—not because they like it, but because they must starve if they do not toil.

But is the Malay population contented? If it be contented, how account for the frequent rebellions against its Dutch rulers? How account for the eagerness which the natives of Netherlands-India display to emigrate, whenever the opportunity serves, to the lands of British Malaya, whence no counter-stream of emigrants flows to the colonies ruled by Holland? How, too, account

for the scarcely veiled sympathy with which the struggle in Âcheh has been watched throughout the length and breadth of the Dutch possessions, a consciousness of which has done more than aught else to force the government to continue, for nearly thirty years, a war of extermination of which Dutchmen are heartily weary and more than a little ashamed? How, too, account for the elaborate precautions against insurrection which are habitually taken in all Dutch stations, even in Batavia itself—the orders promulgated, the *rendezvous* appointed as rallying-points for the European inhabitants, and the constant, galling emphasis which is persistently laid upon the inferiority of the native, as compared with the European, for the purpose of impressing upon him his impotence? These things any observer of average intelligence who visits the Dutch Indies may discover for himself; and he will find the explanation in the undeniable fact that the system in force is, from its very nature, repugnant to the character, the feelings and the pride of a Malayan people. And, more dangerous still, the difference in the treatment meted out to the European and the Asiatic has its reason, from the point of view of the native, not in a dissimilarity of color, but in the accident of creed. “Are Mohammedans permitted to travel in these carriages?” a Malay asked the present writer at the railway-station in Batavia, indicating a first-class compartment. To one who knew the race to which the inquirer belonged, that simple question conveyed a sinister meaning; for it spoke of the devotees of the proudest religion in the world forced to accept a position of inferiority by reason of their adherence to the Prophet’s creed. Such a question could never have been put, in that particular form, by a Malay of the British Protectorate: that it came quite naturally, instinctively, from the lips of a Malay of Batavia is, perhaps, more crushing testimony than aught else could be to the radical unsoundness of the Dutch system. No government of an Oriental race by white men can flourish, and fulfil the ends of its being, unless it rest ultimately upon the will of the vast majority of the governed.

The methods devised by the British for the administration of the Malay Peninsula present as strong a contrast to those in favor with the Dutch as it would be possible to find. From the first, the Native States of British Malaya have been regarded by their English rulers as countries held in trust for their native inhabitants, the people who, according to this view of the matter, have to them

an inalienable right. The temptation to depart from this governing principle has been happily reduced to a minimum, by the extraordinary wealth which these countries have developed and the prosperity which has resulted from the exploitation of their mineral deposits. During the past twenty years, the tin exported from the Peninsula has represented an appreciable fraction of the world's out-put of that metal, amounting in some cases to more than half of the whole. This has given the government of Malaya ample funds with which to open up the country, and at the present time more than 2,250 miles of road have been constructed, and by the end of 1903 no less than 340 miles of railway will be open to traffic. All these and other public works, too, have been paid for out of current revenue, without recourse being had to loans; while the taxes paid by the Malayan population work out at the inconsiderable figure of a trifle over two Mexican dollars per head. When all has been said that can be said, however, the fact remains that, under British rule, not a penny has been diverted from the states which yield the revenue to the government of Great Britain or to the neighboring colony of the Straits Settlements; that every farthing that Malaya has yielded has been devoted to the development of the country; that the actual cost of administration amounts to only 17.63 per cent. of the revenue, and that the native population, which has been relieved of a grinding tyranny and the galling exactions and mulctings inseparable from native rule, is called upon to contribute a quite insignificant sum towards the cost of government. In one direction, an European administration must always appear to a Malayan people to be more oppressive than its own *râjas*, for the latter, by reason of their very inefficiency, are precluded from despoiling their people as thoroughly as they desire, while the white men's systematic methods insure the collection of all taxes which may be imposed, without leaving any loopholes for evasion. When, as is the case in the Dutch colonies, the taxes are excessive, this efficiency becomes in itself an object of bitter detestation to the natives; but in British Malaya the tax burden is so light that even the monotonous regularity of its collection can be forgiven to the government.

Starting with the theory that the British hold these lands only in trust for the native population, care has been taken to give this principle full expression in practice. The government has conceived that it has no right to deprive its Malayan subjects of a

single shred of their personal liberty. In all matters that touch the native population, even remotely, the closest attention is paid to native opinion, feelings, and susceptibilities. Every official is required to possess a working knowledge of the vernacular, and men are selected for the posts of District Officer, and for other appointments which bring them into close contact with the natives, for their knowledge and understanding of Malay character and idiosyncrasy and for their profound sympathy with the people. Holding firmly to the belief, for which their past history supplies ample grounds, that men of the Malayan race are incapable of wise or just self-government, the British administration holds forth to its subjects no delusive prospect of ultimate autonomy, but it is at great pains to consult the wishes of the Malays in all matters that affect their interests, and its practice has been consistently to lead, rather than to drive, them along the path in which they should go. Also, though it regards the natural indolence of the Malays with profound regret, the respect which it entertains for the personal liberty of the individual restrains it from compelling him to engage against his will in the labor which he from his soul abhors. In this region, as in all Malayan lands, Nature is very loving to her children, giving them full measure, pressed down and running over, in return for the veriest minimum of grudging toil; wherefore, though the Malays are suffered to loiter away their lives in the fashion that best commends itself to them, there is no poverty among them, no poor-rates because there are no Malay paupers, no starving unemployed because there is land enough for every one and a little scratching of it yields a generous crop. The result is a thoroughly and justly contented native population, relieved, as by a miracle, from the tyranny under which their fathers groaned, taxed lightly, and endowed with a measure of personal liberty which finds no parallel in their past history; and it is upon this general contentment, this popular allegiance to the new régime, that British rule in Malaya stands four-square, "broad-based upon a people's will."

But, in order to insure to the Malays the enjoyment of complete liberty—which, in their case, means the concession to them of the right to shun unnecessary toil—while at the same time developing the resources of the country in an adequate manner, the British government has been under the obligation of removing all restrictions from the free immigration of Chinese and other

aliens, the men who are fitted by their character and predilections to act as the working-bees of the hive. The whole vast question of Chinese immigration will be found, I think, when reduced to its simplest elements, to be governed by the old, unchangeable, natural law of the survival of the fittest. If we apply this law to any special region, we shall find that in certain localities the law of nature would allow the Chinese immigrant to increase and multiply, while in others the working of the same law would lead to his speedy extinction. For instance, in a temperate climate, such as that of California or New South Wales, the Chinaman could survive, when brought into competition with a white population, only if all manner of artificial means were devised for his protection and for the circumvention of the law of nature. In Malayan lands, on the other hand, he would thrive in similar circumstances, because there his is the race best fitted to survive, and because he is needed to supply a want in the character of the native inhabitants. In such places, left to himself, he would rush in in his thousands, as inevitably as air flows into a vacuum, and any attempt directed towards his exclusion is an artificial contrivance designed to frustrate the natural law. In their Malayan colonies, the Dutch have partially excluded the in-rush of the industrious Chinese, by forcing the immigrants to occupy a gallingly inferior position. In British Malaya, the Chinese have been welcomed with open arms, have been allowed the free enjoyment of their liberty and their wealth, and have been utilized for the development of the country. Lacking their aid, it is safe to say, the Malay States of the Peninsula could never have attained to their present pitch of phenomenal prosperity, and their resources could only have been exploited at all at the sacrifice of that principle upon which British rule in these lands is based.

I have left myself but little space in which to draw the moral which, in my opinion, is to be deduced from these facts—the moral applicable to America's new departure in the Philippines.

The Dutch system, it may be premised, is one which will not readily commend itself to the people of the United States. The main principle underlying it they will instinctively discard, for, though they may not desire to see the Philippines continuing indefinitely to make large demands upon the public purse, they entertain no expectation or wish that the islands should contribute directly to the revenues of the mother-country. All that is

hoped for, then, is that the archipelago may become prosperous, and that its inhabitants may attain to such a measure of happiness and well-being as a government has it in its power to bestow.

Similarly, it is probable that there will be found much in the British method of administration in Malaya which is antagonistic to American ideas. The calm recognition of the fact—for Englishmen who have won an understanding of the character of the Malayan peoples hold it to be a fact as undeniable as the law of gravity itself—that men of this race are, by reason of their innate limitations, incapable of self-government, will not come to them save through the channel of long and, it may be, bitter experience. The cry of “the Philippines for the Filipinos” will doubtless be raised, and the Chinese will, to that end, be rigorously excluded. The hope will be entertained—a generous hope, but based upon a misconception of the capabilities of the race—that the natives of the Philippines can be educated, trained, elevated until they shall be fitted to take their place as citizens of an over-seas State of the Union: and, as long as these illusions remain undisputed, so long will American administrators in the archipelago labor out their lives in a task like that of Sisyphus.

As I have said, the desire of the United States is twofold: to see the Philippines raised to a fair measure of material prosperity, and to bring to the islanders personal liberty and happiness. But, alas, the character and nature of the Malayan races being what it is, these two objects are mutually antagonistic the one to the other, provided always that the archipelago is to be treated as a mere fraction of the Union, in defiance of the immutable facts of geography and of the wholly different circumstances which prevail in it and in America. For, in this case, what is sauce for the goose is by no means necessarily sauce for the gander: what may fit a State of the Union to perfection may spell economical suicide in the Philippines. If the resources of the islands are to be developed, if the new possession is to become self-supporting, labor must be forthcoming, and if the stream of Chinese immigration is to be obstructed by barriers, that labor must be supplied by the native population. And here we encounter the real crux of the situation; for men of the Malayan stock will not work more than their very few wants make inevitable, if left to their own devices as in British Malaya, unless they be compelled to do so, as in the Dutch Indies. In the one case, they become un-

profitable and unsatisfactory members of the community; in the other they are sullen, discontented, ripe for revolt, and constitute a perpetual menace to the men who have taken upon themselves unasked the ordering of their destinies.

The solution of this problem will, I conceive, be readily suggested by the sanguine spirit of the American people. "Granted," they will say, "that the Filipino of to-day is what you declare him to be, a Malay of the Malays, a brown man whom circumstances have Latinized; but why, in the sacred name of Education, should he be denied the capability of improvement? We will take him in hand, as neither the Dutch nor the British have ever done. We will educate, train, develop him. We will awake in him that divine discontent which is the foundation of all desire for better things. We will arouse his slumbering ambition, increase his wants and with them his ability to satisfy them. Thus we shall stimulate his patriotism, strengthen his character, enable him to grasp the white man's views of life and duty, and in the end shall so transform him that he shall learn to govern himself and to take his place among the citizens of the Union!"

There speaks the hopefulness and the energy of the Anglo-Saxon, ever ready and eager to undertake great enterprises, ever triumphantly confident in the efficiency of the machinery at his command: but there also speaks the spirit of the white man who has not come into contact with the grim facts of the oldest continent upon earth; the energy which has no knowledge of the sheer, dead inertia of the Malayan peoples; the ignorance to which no long residence in this land of darkness under sun-glare has brought its flood of dreary enlightenment. A homely proverb supplies the crushing retort: "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear!" In other words, you cannot leave the personal element out of the calculation: you must make allowances for human nature, as it is, not as it ought to be: you must accept the Malayan peoples as God and their climate have fashioned them—as races on the decline, races which expended their share of energy ere ever the history of the Anglo-Saxons had had its obscure beginnings, as races which have had their day and can never be galvanized into new, artificial life by no matter what strenuous endeavor, no matter what lavish expenditure of intelligence and devotion. Another fact, too, calls for recognition. The education of the Malays has been, is being, attempted by the Dutch

and the British, both races, be it remembered, which have at their service a tremendous accumulated experience of Orientals, and the results are the reverse of encouraging.

There is yet one more factor in the problem which I would urge upon the attention of American readers. Both Holland and Great Britain are small, thickly-populated countries, which are altogether too cramped to afford accommodation for all their children. Thus there has never been any lack of Dutchmen and of Englishmen, of the required calibre, willing to accept lifelong exile in Malaya as their lot, receiving as their reward a quite trifling pecuniary recompense. From these European countries it has been men of superior, rather than of inferior, energy and ability who have gone far afield in search of room in which to live; but the conditions of the United States are wholly different. For many years to come, there will still be many partially undeveloped lands to be exploited nearer at hand than the Philippine Archipelago. Congestion of population, as it is understood in England or Holland, does not exist in the States taken as a whole, and therefore there is reason to question whether Americans of the required character will be found ready to accept banishment in an uncongenial climate as their fate. For it must be borne in mind that, if the work undertaken in the Philippines is to yield any good fruit at all, it must be done by men who are prepared to devote their whole lives to it. An intimate knowledge of the character, the customs, views, and language of the natives of the islands is essential, and this can only be gained by long study on the spot. Yet, if the American theory of administration is to have even a bare chance of success, the *personnel* of the Civil Service is of vastly more vital importance to the United States in the Philippines than it is to Great Britain or to Holland in their Eastern possessions; for the theory is based upon the hope that Americans will be able to achieve a feat which the British and the Dutch have failed to accomplish. I have expressed an uncompromising opinion concerning the feasibility of that project: the hopes of its fulfilment will be rendered yet more desperate unless the tools at the disposal of the American government be quite extraordinarily efficient; for in Eastern lands it is the rank and file of the rulers, rather than the men at the head of the service, who chiefly influence the people whom they govern.

HUGH CLIFFORD.